



Office of
the Mayor

March 24, 2017

Most Honorable Members of the Waterville City Council,

This week this Honorable Council was presented with a city budget that included a tax increase of 2.17 mils. While various potential school funding changes from the state were presented by the Waterville Schools, no working budget has been given at this time.

While the proposed increase in spending comes as a shock given the budgetary woes over the last two years, the council should note that 80% of this proposed spending increase is associated with capital improvements and increase road paving. This means that the first task of the Council should be to investigate which items on the list of proposed capital spending projects are “dire necessities” vs. “would be nice to have.” Often throughout the course of Waterville’s history these two things have become confused.

For increased salaries and benefits, new avenues will need to be found to keep overall costs to our residents and business owners down. With three large contract negotiations approaching, this should be kept in mind.

It should be fresh in mind that last year the majority of Waterville residents saw enormous increases to their property tax as the result of a city-wide revaluation. Those who were present at council meetings will recall that over 100 residents showed up multiple nights and the view was very different than our usual meetings, consisting mostly of those elderly residents on fixed incomes who were searching with their eyes for signs of relief.

Regressive by nature, when property tax increases those hit hardest are those who are the most vulnerable amongst us. With roughly a quarter of our population age 55 and older, Waterville should take seriously the needs of those living on fixed incomes. We also have information provided by our schools as to the severity of the number of homes in poverty, and where food insecurity is a fact of life. When a revaluation caused many of these homes’ tax bills to skyrocket 30-50% after being passed in mid-August – just 7 months ago – do we believe that these struggling seniors and families have had enough time to adjust to last year’s increase, let alone ask for even more?

Waterville stands on the verge on an incredible revitalization and everywhere we look, the people of Waterville remain optimistic about our future. With the downtown revitalization, new job announcements, and the opening of the Trafton Road Interchange we stand on the verge of a renaissance that will eventually create the number of jobs needed to alleviate some of our pain. We must, however, remember why and who we are doing this for. If we cannot ensure that our current



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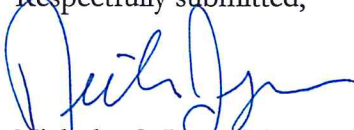
residents can continue to live out their lives in their homes, our work will be all for naught.

We cannot control outside circumstances in the lives of individuals and families, but over taxation should not be what residents fear most. When looking at the budget and tax rates, do not ask what can be afforded by your most affluent constituents, but rather who can least afford this change to their annual budgets.

Lastly, I would caution all of us not to fall into the temptation of turning what are sure to be difficult discussions ahead into an “us vs. them” mentality, whether it is amongst ourselves or with those on various sides of this discussion in our community. We are, even in disagreement, one Waterville.

We still have several months of review and there is much work still yet to be done in the crafting of our final budget. If we keep at the forefront of our minds that each one of us has volunteered to be servants of the public, we will remember those who we serve. In doing that, we will see clearly that increasing the tax burden at the current time is not an outcome that we can accept.

Respectfully submitted,



Nicholas S. Isgro, Mayor